



# News Release

**For immediate release:** February 19, 2011

(11-025)

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## **Lengthy health advisory ends for troubled water system**

**OLYMPIA** – A health advisory in place for the Columbia Crest Estates water system since June 2010 ended today, just three days after ownership was transferred to a nearby water district. A Cowlitz County Superior Court commissioner temporarily transferred ownership to the Kelso-based Beacon Hill Water and Sewer District on February 16.

Beacon Hill has secured the facilities and taken over day-to-day operations. State and Cowlitz County health staff inspected the system on Thursday. The disinfection system is running, and lab test results show the water is free of coliform bacteria. With a certified operator in charge, the state agreed to end the health advisory.

“I’m thrilled that the water district staff worked so quickly to get the health advisory lifted,” said Denise Clifford, director of the agency’s Office of Drinking Water. “They really stepped up to help these people.”

The agency issued the health advisory on June 2, 2010, after a water line broke and system pressure was lost, which could have allowed bacteria and other contaminants to get into the lines. In addition, there was no certified operator to oversee repairs and disinfect the water system.

Last year, the health department fined original owner Dan Class \$21,060 for violating its orders to properly maintain the water system, and for missing deadlines for installing an approved arsenic treatment system. The violations included failure to regularly monitor water quality and failure to obtain a certified operator to run the system as the state requires. His appeal of the fine is scheduled to be heard by an agency health law judge on March 30.

On Wednesday, Cowlitz County Court Commissioner Gary Bashor issued an order granting temporary ownership of the water system to the water district.

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The state sought the emergency receivership order because the Cowlitz County Public Utility District (PUD) had warned residents that it planned to shut off power to the water system's wells because the owner's account was seriously past due. That would have left the 22-home subdivision between Woodland and Kalama with no water service at all. This was the third time since October 2010 that the PUD has issued shut-off notices for failure to pay.

A hearing is set for February 28 to further consider the receivership and give Class a chance to state his case. If the court finds that a receivership arrangement should continue, a permanent receiver would be appointed to manage and operate the water system for at least a year.

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